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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 HARARE 001943

SIPDIS

NSC FOR SENIOR AFRICA DIRECTOR JENDAYI FRAZER
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TAGS: PGOV ECON PINR ZI
SUBJECT: MUGABE'S CABINET RESHUFFLE REWARDS LOYALTY, NOT
COMPETENCE

REF: HARARE 1872

Classified By: political section chief Matt Harrington. Reasons: 1.5 (B) and (D).

Summary

11. (C) In a long-anticipated move, President Mugabe named a new Cabinet on August 24 that looks very much like the old one, albeit with some portfolios shifted around. Finance Minister Makoni and Health Minister Stamps were the only ones dismissed, while two new Ministers (former Ambassador to the U.S. and Chief Executive of the Zimbabwe Tourist Authority Amos Midzi and former Cabinet member Witness Mangwende) and six new deputy ministers were named. Two new ministries -- Energy and Power Development, and Small and Medium Enterprises Development -- were created. Loyalty, not competence, appeared to be the primary criterion for the personnel moves, as Mugabe and his inner circle hunker down in the face of increasing international and domestic pressure. The new Cabinet is composed almost entirely of Mugabe sycophants who will continue to lead Zimbabwe in the same disastrous policy direction, perhaps with more zeal, and even worse results (if the new Finance Minister is not up to the task.) Mugabe's failure to appoint two new Vice-Presidents, as expected, leaves observers in the dark for now about his retirement and succession intentions. End Summary.

12. (U) Those who have retained their Cabinet portfolios are as follows:

Foreign Affairs: Stan Mudenge
Information and Publicity: Jonathan Moyo
Agriculture, Lands and Resettlement: Joseph Made
Justice, Legal, and Parliamentary Affairs: Patrick Chinamasa
Defense: Sydney Sekeramayi
Education, Sport, and Culture: Aeneas Chigwedere
Environment and Tourism: Francis Nhema
Local Government, Public Works, and National Housing:
Ignatius Chombo
Mines and Mining Development: Edward Chindori-Chininga
Public Service, Labor, and Social Welfare: July Moyo
Rural Resources and Water Development: Joyce Mujuru
Youth Development, Gender, and Employment Creation: Elliot Manyika
State Security: Nicholas Goche

The remaining ministerial portfolios were distributed as follows:

Home Affairs: Kembo Mohadi (formerly Deputy Minister of Local Government)
Finance: Herbert Murerwa (formerly Minister of Industry and International Trade)
Transport and Communications: Witness Mangwende
Health and Child Welfare: David Parirenyatwa (formerly Deputy Health Minister)
Energy and Power Development: Amos Midzi
Small and Medium Enterprises Development: Sithembiso Nyoni (formerly Minister for the Informal Sector)
Minister of State for State Enterprises and Parastatals: Paul Mangwana (formerly Deputy Justice Minister)
Minister of State for Science and Technology Development: Olivia Muchena (formerly Minister of State in VP Msika's office)
Minister of State for Land Reform: Flora Bhuka (formerly Minister of State in VP Muzenda's office)

Six new deputy ministers were appointed:

Industry and International Trade: Kenneth Manyonda
Mines and Mining Development: Jaison Machaya
Energy and Power Development: Reuben Marumahoko
Local Government, Public Works, and National Housing: Chief Fortune Charumbira
Rural Resources and Water Development: Tinos Rusere
Small and Medium Scale Enterprises: Kenneth Mutiwekuziva

13. (C) Brian Raftopoulos, one of Zimbabwe's most perceptive political analysts, described the reshuffle as a "consolidation of Mugabe's position." He said it is clear from the personnel moves that Mugabe is "digging in his heels" and that we are unlikely to see any drawback from the GOZ's current policy direction. Eddison Zvobgo, the estranged ZANU-PF politician who was expelled by Mugabe from the politburo in 2000 because of his willingness to stand up to the Zimbabwean President, described the Cabinet changes in less diplomatic terms in a discussion with us. He claimed that every member of the new Cabinet is a "strident yes-man or yes-woman" for President Mugabe. Cabinet and the ZANU-PF politburo, he continued, have become mere rubber stamps for Mugabe's decisions, and not a single member of those bodies is prepared to challenge the Zimbabwean President.

14. (C) Comment: It is clear that political loyalty was the prime -- if not exclusive -- criterion in the re-assignment of ministerial portfolios. If competence had been a consideration, the hapless Joseph Made, who denied until recently the possibility of food shortages in Zimbabwe, would have been forced to pack his bags, along with many of his colleagues. The fact that Made and other loyal hardliners such as Jonathan Moyo, Patrick Chinamasa, Ignatius Chombo, and Elliot Manyika have been asked to stay is a clear indication that the GOZ is not about to undertake any major policy reversals. Makoni's removal strongly suggests that the GOZ has no plans to infuse its economic decision-making with any sense of rationality. In fact, if retread Finance Minister Murerwa -- who preceded and now succeeds Makoni in this position -- does not hold the line on fiscal restraint and permit the cumbersome but still functional parallel exchange rate system to continue, the economy could contract even more rapidly and hyper-inflation set in. We interpret the reshuffle as a circling of the wagons, as Mugabe hunkers down with his most trusted subordinates in the face of growing international and domestic pressure. President Mugabe was widely expected to appoint two new Vice-Presidents to replace incumbents Simon Muzenda and Joseph Msika. The fact that he did not suggests that Mugabe and his inner circle have not yet reached any definitive conclusions about the issue of succession. John Nkomo's apparent demotion from Home Affairs to a newly-created Minister of State for Special Affairs position in the President's office, when he was widely expected to be named Vice-President, suggests he has lost ground in internal succession maneuvering.

15. (C) Comment continued: The timing of the reshuffle likely was motivated in part by growing criticism that the old Cabinet had no legal standing because its members were not re-appointed after the March presidential election. According to the Zimbabwean constitution, the offices of Vice-President, Minister, and Deputy Minister become vacant upon the assumption of office of a new President. Although the question of whether Mugabe was a "new" president appears open to interpretation, Mugabe likely wanted to avoid any related judicial challenges. Zvobgo, who is an expert on constitutional law, insisted that the old Cabinet should have taken new oaths of office after the election, as Mugabe did. He informed us that the legal parliamentary committee which he chairs had rejected 47 decrees (statutory instruments) issued since the election because the ministers who signed them had no legal standing, and had vowed to make this an issue when parliament resumes sitting in late September. Zvobgo surmised that this is what drove Mugabe to reshuffle the Cabinet when he did, a move which will give the new Ministers sufficient time to re-issue those 47 decrees before Parliament reconvenes.

Biographic information

16. (C) Detailed biographic information on all of the new Cabinet members will follow septel. In the meantime, we wanted to provide the following brief sketches:

Simba Makoni: Makoni had been living on borrowed time since Mugabe publicly criticized as "saboteurs" and "enemies of the state" anyone who advocated devaluation of the Zimbabwean dollar, a small camp of which Makoni had been the most vocal member. Since his appointment in 2000, Makoni had been a lonely advocate within GOZ circles of rational economic decision-making, and Mugabe likely tired of his willingness to criticize -- regularly and publicly -- bad government decisions.

Kembo Mohadi: Mohadi has engaged in efforts to politicize food distribution. As reported reftel, he told NGOs distributing food in Gwanda that they would have to follow government directives and that their equipment would be taken over by the GOZ. The fact that he is now, as Minister of Home Affairs, in charge of Zimbabwe's police force, does not inspire confidence that we will soon see a return to the rule of law.

Witness Mangwende: ZANU-PF's deputy secretary for

administration, Mangwende has previously served in Ministerial positions at Foreign Affairs, Information and Publicity, and Land and Agriculture. Mangwende is a hardliner who believes strongly in the moral rectitude of ZANU-PF's fast track resettlement effort. In a June 2001 meeting between Speaker of Parliament Emmerson Mnangagwa and incoming AF/S Director Scott Delisi, Mangwende made no attempt at diplomatic niceties, rudely rejecting the validity of U.S. interest in internal Zimbabwean developments.

SULLIVAN